

## Chapter 6.0

# Demolition and Relocation

### 6.1 Demolition

Demolishing a historic structure within the district has the potential to irreversibly change the character of the district and can compromise the quality and sense of place of the entire district. Historic structures represent a tangible link to a community's past. They are physical expressions of architectural style, building technology, and personal taste. Demolition of a historic structure is strongly discouraged, and any time a demolition is proposed, alternatives must be carefully explored.



*Historic house converted into office*

#### ***Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition***

The Historic Preservation Commission can deny a Certificate of Appropriateness that requests the demolition of a building only when the structure is determined by the State Historic Preservation Officer as having *statewide* significance, as defined by of the National Register of Historic

Places level of significance evaluation. In all other cases, the Commission cannot deny a COA request for a demolition, but it can issue a temporary delay of demolition while preservation alternatives are being explored. The COA, then, would be approved but with an effective date of up to 365 days from the date of approval. The delay would occur when the HPC finds that the structure has historic significance on a local, state or national level or is representative of a distinct architectural style or elements of that style. During the delay, the Commission should actively explore options for preservation that might include negotiations with the property owner to determine other viable uses, helping identify a buyer who could preserve the property, or assisting the owner in relocating the building within the district.

If the Commission determines that the building in question has no historic significance or value, the COA can be approved without delay. In rare instances, a structure may be deteriorated beyond repair to the point that it poses a threat to public safety and welfare. In these extreme cases, the City will have adopted a condemnation ordinance under the minimum housing code. These demolition requests still must go before the Commission.

### ***Demolition by Neglect***

City Council can determine that, due to the failure of an owner to conduct routine maintenance over time, the structure is continually deteriorating to the point that it is effectively being demolished by neglect. In such a case, City Council can issue an ordinance causing the property owner to repair those conditions requiring the continued deterioration.

### **Demolition Guidelines**

**6.1.1** Prior to undertaking demolition work, the property owner shall approach the Historic Preservation Commission to determine the historic significance of the structure and its relationship to the district.

**6.1.2** If the HPC determines that the structure is historically significant, it shall delay the demolition for an appropriate time in order for staff and the Commission to work with the property owner to seek viable alternatives to demolition. Alternatives to demolition include, among other things:

- If a building is in disrepair, working with the property owner to develop a rehabilitation plan and identify funding assistance such as rehabilitation tax credits that would allow the building to be rehabilitated.
- If a building does not fit the owner's required needs, determining if the structure could be adaptively reused.
- Working with the property owner to locate a buyer who will

use the property without demolishing the structure.

- As a last resort, finding a suitable location within the district for the historic building to be moved and working with the property owner to develop a plan for relocation.

**6.1.3** If all alternatives for preservation have been exhausted, the HPC shall work with the owner to make a permanent record of the historic resource including photography, an architectural description of the building, chain of title, floor and site plans, or collection of other historic documentation that is available. Since Washington is a Certified Local Government, it must make an annual report to the Department of Archives and History that includes a list of all demolitions and provide historic data on the demolished properties.

**6.1.4** When a demolition is proposed, the applicant must submit a landscaping plan illustrating proposed landscaping and other site development to be completed within six (6) months after demolition.

**6.1.5** If a property is subject to demolition by neglect, the City Council has the authority to adopt a demolition by neglect ordinance that requires the property owner to repair the conditions causing the deterioration.

## 6.2 Relocation

Removing a contributing structure from its historic setting can compromise the integrity of the building and the district as a whole. Often, however, relocation is the only method to preserve a structure that is faced with demolition. Relocation should be considered only when all other preservation alternatives have been eliminated. Occasionally, a structure may be moved *into* the historic district.

In planning the move of a structure, consideration must be given for how the relocated building will impact surrounding structures and fit into its new setting. Often, architectural features are compromised when moving a structure. Only an experienced house mover should be used so that damage to the historic building itself, significant vegetation, or buildings along the route is minimized. Prior to moving a structure, the property owner is advised to contact the State Historic Preservation Office to determine what measures need to be taken to ensure that the contributing status of the building is not jeopardized.

Relocation can be looked at in much the same way as new construction in that the building being introduced into a new environment must complement the character of its surroundings in architectural style, size, scale, orientation, and landscaping. Much like new construction, the applicant should submit a plan for relocation including a site plan and drawings of the building in its new environment.

### Relocation Guidelines

- 6.2.1** Relocation of a building within the historic district should only be considered as an alternative to demolition when all other preservation options have been exhausted.
- 6.2.2** Prior to the act of relocation, the HPC shall work with the owner to document through photography, drawings, and other means the existing location and environment of the historic structure. Measured drawings should be made particularly if there is to be any reconstruction once the building is moved.
- 6.2.3** The HPC will work with the property owner to identify a contractor experienced in moving historic structures.
- 6.2.4** Character-defining elements and significant architectural features shall be protected during the relocation process. Should any damage occur, it should be repaired.
- 6.2.5** The relocated building must be compatible with the surrounding structures in its architectural style, scale, height, side and front setback, and orientation.
- 6.2.6** Significant vegetation, such as mature trees, should be protected on the new site and appropriate landscaping consistent with the surrounding historic properties should be installed.

- 6.2.7** Guidelines for new construction should be followed whenever relocating a structure in the historic district.
- 6.2.8** Moving accessory structures that have historic significance should follow these same guidelines.
- 6.2.9** Once the building has been removed, any improvement to the vacant lot (former building site) shall be compatible with the surrounding historic properties.